

Partner Council 2022-2025 Report

to

The Executive of the General Council November 14-15, 2025



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The United Church of Canada is committed to partnering in God's Mission to build communities that resist empire, involving the whole church in global partnerships.

From the 2008 Review of Global Partnership Principles

2022

Due to COVID impacts in 2020-21, the 2018-2022 Partner Council members were re-appointed for the 2022-2025 term with some changes as follows:

- **Ms. Annie Namala** (India), Chair of Human Rights Foundation, replacing Ms. Parul Chaudhary (Asia partnerships)
- **Ms. Aisha Frances**, Executive Director of KAIROS-Canada (2022-2023), with **Ms. Silvia Vasquez Olguin** Gender Justice Coordinator appointed in 2024-2025 (Canadian ecumenical partnerships)
- **Mr. Samer Laham**, Director, Middle East Council of Churches (Middle East partnerships)
- **Mr. Marcelo Leites**, General Secretary, World Christian Student Fellowship (Global Ecumenical partnerships)
- **Mr. Kangwa Mabuluki**, General Secretary, All Africa Theological Education by Extension Association (Africa partnerships)
- **Mr. Horacio Mesones**, Centro Regional Ecu  nico de Asesor  a y Servicio (Latin America & Caribbean partnerships)

In 2022, members of the Partner Council participated in the 44th General Council, which was conducted virtually. Alongside engaging in Learning and Discussion Sessions, members also took part in a virtual Global and Ecumenical Learning Lab focused on exploring strategies and ideas to address the global climate crisis.

Members were re-appointed by the GCE during its meeting on November 18-19, 2022, to serve an additional three-year term.

A Note from Annie Namala, Partner Council member, HRF, India



"As I reflect on 2022, I am filled with gratitude for the deep connections and meaningful work of the Partner Council. It was a year of renewed commitment, as we were re-appointed to serve a second term, allowing us to continue our vital work in fostering global partnerships. We had the privilege of participating in the 44th General Council, engaging in crucial discussions on the global climate crisis and contributing to the church's 3-year Strategic Plan. Our work is rooted in the belief that, through collaboration and shared vision, we can build communities of right relationships. I look forward to our continued journey together."

Key Partner Council activities in 2022



6

Online planning and coordination meetings held

Representing partners from Asia, Africa, Latin America & the Caribbean, the Middle East, and global ecumenical bodies. 2 meetings engaged Partner Council in reflection on the UCC Call and Vision



2022 GC44 Engagement

Partner Council members actively participated in the 2022 General Council 44 online, including learning sessions and the Global Learning Lab.



**3-Year term
Re-appointment**

Members were re-appointed to serve an additional term from 2022-2025 to ensure continuity and deepen partnerships.

2023

Called into Mutual Radical Accompaniment

The Partner Council engaged with the Global Partnership Program staff team in a mandated review of the church's Global Partnership Program Review from March to June 2023 to assess program alignment with the church's Call, Vision and Strategic Plan 2023–2025. At its June 2023 meeting, the Executive of The 44th General Council approved [Called into Radical Accompaniment: A Review of The United Church of Canada's Global Partnership Program](#).

Partner Council members visit Regional Councils

From October 16 to 27, 2023, 3 members of the Partner Council gathered in Canada; 2 members were unable to attend in person because of delays in Canada processing their visas. It was the first in-person visit since 2018. The focus was Partner Accompaniment of The Call and Vision through visits to 2 Regional Councils and participation in the General Council 44 October meeting.

As The United Church of Canada lives into its Call to *Deep Spirituality, Bold Discipleship, and Daring Justice*, Partner Council visited with United Church communities of faith in First Dawn Eastern Edge and Nakonha:ka Regional Councils from October 20-24, 2023 to engage with and reflect back to The United Church conversations on the following questions:

- How can the Partner Council hold The United Church to its aspirations, and encourage the Church in pursuing its Call and Vision?
- In what ways can partners accompany The United Church in living out the [Call and Vision](#)?
- Where do you see, hear, and feel the Call at work in the Regions, and communities you visited with? How can this be strengthened and grown?
- What opportunities do you see for partners to accompany and/or move forward the church's strategic plan in the areas of Bold Discipleship, Deep Spirituality, and Daring Justice?

Recommendations from Regional Council visits included the following:

- ❖ integrating short/longer-term internships in migrant source-countries as part of theological training would better ground the United Church Vision into their contextual realities;
- ❖ encouraging the church to strengthen the bonds between the two spaces to help further 'deep spirituality, bold discipleship and daring justice' into the community life;
- ❖ encouraging new areas of collaboration between the church and these institutions to be explored; and
- ❖ urging The United Church to advocate with the state to build systems that can evaluate the knowledge and skills among migrant and refugee communities to help them to be gainfully integrated into the economic and employment framework of the country.

Partner Council also offered the following **overall** recommendations to GCE:

- ❖ We continue to **encourage solidarity in prayer and advocacy for people suffering everywhere**. We are particularly aware of the suffering of the people of Palestine and Israel where war was raging during our visit.
- ❖ Today's world is so interconnected in terms of challenges and hope. The forces of greed and corporate interests are so strong. We are on one side of the stream, and you are on the other. We encourage The United Church to **engage with partners in co-creating spaces to address these challenges together**.
- ❖ If possible, we encourage **increasing the membership of the Partner Council** to allow for greater global regional representation.
- ❖ In their meetings, both the General Council and its Executive are focused heavily on the Canadian context and the issues in Canada. Partner Council engagement as corresponding members is an opportunity to say that the issues the United Church is experiencing are not only in Canada; they are global. Even as the Executive addresses governance, strategic planning and budgets, **there is space there for Partner Council to draw attention to global issues, encouraging us to address these together**.

- ❖ We encourage The United Church of Canada to **maintain these spaces of dialogue and partnership**. The recommendation of Roundtables in the Global Partnership Review provides broader spaces for partner participation than the Partner Council for the purposes of shared analyses, shared reflection and ideas.



Horacio Mesones visits First Dawn Eastern Edge Regional Council



Annie Namala and Samer Laham visit with Nakonha:ka Regional Council



3 members of Partner Council with United Church of Canada leadership October 13, 2023 (from left to right): Rev. Jennifer Henry, Samer Laham, Annie Namala, Rev. Michael Blair, Right Rev. Dr. Carmen Lansdowne, Rev. Dr. Japhet Ndhlovu and Horacio Mesones. Photo Credit: The United Church of Canada

2024

The radical accompaniment work led by Partner Council towards decolonizing partnerships began to take shape and gather momentum in 2024. In its in-person meeting May 7-15, the Council drafted the Mutual Radical Accompaniment framework for further sharpening through consultations with all global partners, and **encouraged the GCE** and the whole church to co-create this with partners. On July 31, 2024, Partner Council hosted 77 global partners in an initial online conversation about Mutual Radical Accompaniment. In regional breakout conversations (Africa, Asia, Latin America & the Caribbean and Middle East), partners discussed context-specific approaches and next steps.

Mutual radical accompaniment is a concept, a process, a strategy, and an opportunity that emerges from the Global Majority. It is:



Contextual &
Partner-led



Rooted in
Communities



For all and
all belong



Learning together;
sharing knowledge



Addressing global
challenges in
partnership

Partner Council identified decolonizing partnership as essential for mutual radical accompaniment. More clearly articulated as decoloniality¹, regional spaces or “roundtables” led by partners provide opportunities and spaces for addressing global challenges together. Regional roundtables were planned in 2024; 2 were held in 2025. These will involve leadership of the new Partner Council members (2025-2028) and include the outgoing Partner Council who continue their engagement.



Partner Council meets May 2024 at the General Council Offices

¹ Sabelo J Ndlovu-Gatsheni defines decoloniality as “a liberatory praxis-driven movement that goes beyond political independence to actively dismantle the ongoing logic of coloniality that persists in the structures of power, knowledge and culture after colonialism ends.” It is the ‘how’ of decolonization.

2025

Mending the World Roundtables

Middle East

In January 2025, Samer Laham, Partner Council member from the Middle East Council of Churches (MECC) led partners in the region in planning and hosting a roundtable from January 20-25 in Amman, Jordan. 3 partners organizations from Palestine who intended to participate in person instead joined online for 7 hours a day over 4 days because of sudden closures of border crossings by the Israeli occupation. Full Communion partner United Church of Christ joined in person, as did Church of Sweden, ACT Alliance Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Region, Kerkinactie (Netherlands), and Christian Aid (UK and Ireland). The conversations were both challenging and rich.

Key take-aways:

- i. a preference for the term 'sharing power' rather than 'shifting power'. "I don't want to relinquish the power God gave me; I want to share power with others. We want to invite people to be on the journey together with us."
- ii. We are not yet in the same place on the journey. But the journey has already begun for partners. Are you a 'donor' or a partner? What does this mean for you? For some partners, the journey is going in the opposite direction with funding partners establishing offices in-country.
- iii. 'Locally-led' is different from 'localization'. Localization is the view *of* the system *by* the system.
- iv. To truly shift power, don't just talk about it; do it everywhere.
- v. "Power is never relinquished willingly; it usually has to be fought for".
- vi. Learn together and from each other; test ideas on the ground in a contextual way.

Asia

From May 19-20, 2025, Annie Namala, Partner Council Member from Human Rights Foundation (HRF) in India led regional partners in planning and hosting a roundtable in the Philippines. Partners from across the region gathered in person "to translate mutual radical accompaniment towards synergising our prophetic mission of decolonisation."

Among other *affirmations* in the resulting Manila Declaration, partners:

- ❖ recognise that decolonisation has to be in solidarity with the most affected communities, with their organisations, and often under their leadership;
- ❖ anticipate that mutual radical accompaniment will be a deeply intense, personal, political, and institutional journey that has to be based on mutual radical trust, transparency, and respect that involves a mutual radical sharing of vulnerabilities and challenges at all levels both with the UCC and its partners;
- ❖ will develop practical ways to integrate decolonization and mutual radical accompaniment in faith-based activities and in all our programmes; and
- ❖ commit, in solidarity and partnership, towards a mutual radical accompaniment and friendship our individual, institutional, and collective journeys of faith in action.

Key activities 2024-2025

	6 Planning meetings held in 2024: 2 in-person and 4 online	In-person meetings were held in May 2024 (Toronto); and November 2024 during ACT Alliance General Assembly in Indonesia
	77 Global partners engaged in Radical Accompaniment	Council members hosted an online conversation with partners on Mutual Radical Accompaniment with regional conversations about next steps
	4 Global learning visits planned and hosted	Partner Council members participated in planning for and accompanying 12 United Church people in learning visits on the future of more equitable and decolonizing global partnerships. A separate report is submitted to the November 14-15, 2025 GCE.
	Participation in GC45	All Partner Council members participated in GC45 online. Due to illness and visa issues, only 3 members were able to attend GC45 in person in Calgary



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Regional Mending the World Roundtables

**In Amman, Jordan
and
in Manila, Philippines**